

## Congressman Bright Urges Swift Passage of Emergency Funding for FEMA

WASHINGTON, DC &ndash; Congressman Bright delivered a speech from the floor of the House of Representatives urging the Senate to quickly act to pass emergency funding for FEMA. On March 24th, the House passed H.R. 4899, which would provide FEMA approximately \$5.1 billion to cover existing disasters from fiscal year 2010, but the Senate has yet to act. From Bright's speech:

&ldquo;Mr. Speaker, nearly every day my office hears from local emergency managers, mayors, and county commissioners who express frustration over the fact they are still waiting for the money FEMA promised them. These are not people who expect a hand out from the government; they're simply asking about the emergency assistance they were already granted months, and in some cases, over a year ago.&rdquo;

You can view Congressman Bright's floor speech by clicking [here](#). Congressman Bright's speech, as prepared, is below.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to refocus our attention on funding shortfalls in the Federal Emergency Management Agency. On March 24th, the House passed nearly \$5.1 billion in emergency funding to help FEMA meet its obligations. This money is not allocated for future disasters or for bureaucratic costs; this is money that FEMA has already promised to local counties to help them put their lives back in order after federally-declared disasters. Yet the Senate has thus far refused to act on this important legislation. Our constituents can't wait any longer.

The recent flooding in Tennessee, tornadoes in Alabama and Mississippi, and the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico underscore the need to pass emergency funding for our disaster management agency. These events are startling in scope and will certainly require assistance from the federal government. How can we expect FEMA to effectively respond to future disasters if they have yet to meet their obligations from over a year ago?

Mr. Speaker, nearly every day my office hears from local emergency managers, mayors, and county commissioners who express frustration over the fact they are still waiting for the money FEMA promised them. These are not people who expect a hand out from the government; they're simply asking about the emergency assistance they were already granted months, and in some cases, over a year ago.

Henry County, which is in my congressional district in Southeast Alabama, is a good example of how FEMA's budgetary issues have affected towns across our great nation. Henry County started \$158,000 project to replace a large drainage structure under County Road 2 that was damaged during last spring's floods. FEMA approved the project, but has not been able to distribute money to the county. In addition to County Road 2, Henry County is still waiting for reimbursement for three other road projects that resulted from flooding in December of 2009.

As you can see, a small county is waiting on two different payments from FEMA- one from a disaster that occurred over a year ago- and I am sure the story is similar in other areas of the country. What is more troubling is that we are still debating this issue while spring floods are out in full force, and Hurricane season is less than a month away. We cannot forget about the promises we've already made as we brace for the next disaster to strike American soil.

Last year saw record disasters around the country. Floods soaked the southeast. Wildfires burned in the west. And record snows blanketed the Midwest and Northeast. It is understandable that FEMA used up all of its budgeted resources. Congress must now act to provide our communities with the funds they were promised.

Mr. Speaker, I am a committed fiscal conservative and I believe we should closely watch every dollar we spend. I welcome a debate on how to reduce federal spending, and reform the way FEMA operates in order to make it more efficient. However, the time for that debate is not while our communities wait for necessary and guaranteed federal funds.

In closing, let me once again urge the Senate to act on this very pressing issue. As the summer nears, we simply cannot afford to ignore this problem any longer. The Senate needs to do what the House has already done and pass emergency funding for FEMA, and pass it quickly. Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.